



# Dimensions of Sin in Graham Greene's *The Third Man*

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**Abstract**— The term 'sin' not only pertains to theology and religion but also holds significant relevance in the lives of individuals. It influences their morale and behavior throughout society. Whether we are aware of the concept of sin or not, it is the foundation of our moral disposition. The impact of sin on one's life is undeniable. It significantly impacts our lives. Like the state law, its consequences are sometimes not readily apparent, but they are highly powerful. As an illustration, we can see that, despite the fact that it is officially forbidden to throw trash in public areas or monuments, individuals consistently disregard this law. However, no rules exist in any temple or church, despite the fact that people do not put waste there. It is because of a sense of sin. It is because of a sense of sin. And it will be determined what acts come under this word. To comprehend the essence of sin, it is essential to ascertain its definition and explore its dimensions. This paper will analyze how these qualities appear through the characters in Graham Greene's novel *The Third Man*.



**Keywords**— Sin, Pride, Selfishness, Arrogance, Moral Disposition, Wickedness. Murder, Injustice, Dishonesty'

Sin is natural for man in the sense that it is universal but not in the sense that it is necessary.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Graham Greene was the great writer of twentieth century; the themes of his novels mostly revolve around the sinful acts of his characters. Many critics called him a Roman Catholic Novelist. Although he objected strongly to being described as a Roman Catholic Novelist, rather than as a novelist who happened to be catholic. Catholic religious' themes are at the root of much of his writing.

According to *Oxford Dictionary*, Sin means, an offence against God or against a religious or moral law. However, as it seems defining the act of sin in real life is not that simple or straightforward. (1423)

According to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Sin is an offence against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human

solidarity. It has been defined as an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law. (505)

In his book, *A Right Conception of Sin*, Richard S. Taylor talks about the acts, that falls under the sin. He summarizes that God quarrel is not to our humanity but our disposition, but with our disposition to set our will against his. This is the thing, which he is trying to get rid of, and that is the only thing, which will bring final condemnation. In other words, he opines, Sin is the transgression of law. (12)

As we can observe in the *Holy Bible*, various acts are falls under sin. These are sinful acts, because these are restricted to commit. Although, God spoken through the Scripture. We can find some description of these sinful acts in *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*. These acts are adultery, arrogance, backbiting, bribery, covetousness, deceit, dishonesty, evil influence, murder, injustice, lying, neglect of mercy, oppression, partiality, polygamy, pride, selfishness, slander, unjust gain of wealth etc. These acts can affect our spiritual disposition and our relationship with God. By committing these acts we harm to other

people too, which is a forbidden act in the Holy Bible. As we can see the one of very popular verse of (Mark 12:31) in *Holy Bible*:

Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no command greater than this.

Therefore, we can say that by following God's command, we obey the God, and by transgressing his command, we are committing a sin. There are various acts, which are going to be discussed in the novel.

Graham Greene, whose long life (1904-1991) nearly spanned the twentieth century, was one of its greatest novelists. He began to attract notice as a novelist with his fourth book, *Orient Express*, in 1932.

Graham Greene's *The Third Man* published in 1948. It is a story about a racketeer Harry Lime who is also a protagonist of the novel, even he was not available physically more than half part of novel but the story triggered and affected by his mysterious death or may we call it murder, as Martins was thinking initially in the novel. Lime had been selling watered-down penicillin on Vienna's black market. Murder, homicide, theft etc. were the by-product of his acts. Because of its shortage and trafficking, men were dying in war and hospital. These acts are crime against law and sin against spirituality; it is a grave sin also, because this leads to many innocent men's death.

The Novel starts with the introduction of his best friend Rollo Martins a thirty-five-year-old second grade writer who invited by his oldest friend Harry Lime in post-war Vienna. But he learns that Lime is killed by a car accident same day and buried that day. After some investigations, Martins discovers that Lime is alive and he plotted his fake death because of saving himself from the catch of law. And to learn this truth Martin disguise himself as decoy and confront to his friend Lime and by taking law in his hand he killed his friend Lime. That is the way, story ends in this novel.

The novel, begin with the introduction of the sinful act of Rollo Martin, a friend of Lime. On his acts, Officer Calloway aptly reflects:

One never knows when the blow may fall. When I saw Rollo Martins first I made this note on him for my security police files: 'In normal circumstances a cheerful fool. Drinks too much and may cause a little trouble. Whenever a woman passes raises his eyes and makes some comment, but I get the impression that really he'd rather not be bothered.'

It is evident from the aforementioned excerpts that Martin was a natural polygamist and drinker. He always attempts to please his sexual appetite, and seeing multiple women is just his way of getting it. Furthermore, it is a prohibited act for a Christian. As in the *Holy Bible*, we can observe that: But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' (Matt 5:28)

The other sinful act of his behaviour is that he is a drunkard by nature, and no control over himself. Moreover, it ultimately leads a person to other sinful acts such, adultery, murder, quarrel, wickedness etc. All these acts lead to the 'transgression of law' of God.

The other incident of sinful act appeared in chapter two of the novel, when Martins learns that Calloway is police officer, so he becomes very angry and in disgust, he says that: I've always hated policeman. They are always either crooked or stupid." In addition, at other place he again says,

Why don't you policemen catch a few murderers for a change?

Here we can observe the absolute hatred and anger toward Officer Calloway. Even in second time, Martins blamed the all police department for this, that is once again contrary to *Holy Bible's* teaching in Luke 6:42,

How can you say to your brother, Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

As we can observe in the novel that officer Calloway was doing just his duty and nothing else, but it is Martins, who in spite of having no connection with the sinful acts of his friend, was overreacting. In addition, Martins again got angry over Officer Calloway and rebuked: Listen, Callaghan, or whatever your bloody name is. I'm going to make you look the biggest bloody fool in Vienna.'

His immoral deed of rage is portrayed in the narrative. Again, we see Martin's 'ungratefulness' in the novel. Further in the novel when Martins asks to Officer Calloway that he want to drink some wine because he has not enough money for this. By learning, that officer Calloway offered him wine happily. However, at the time of departing from bar, he learns that Calloway is a police officer, and he forgot everything whatever he did to him and says: I'm glad I don't have to feel grateful. I suppose

that they were on expenses? In this way, it represent that Martins is an ungrateful person, who for the sake of his convenience can forget every deeds of goodness done by anyone. The Holy Bible aptly speaks about it:

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. (2Ti 3:1-5)

As we move on further in novel, it may be observe that in spite of having a dangerous situation in Vienna for Martins' life, and he felt it too, he was very curious to find out who has killed Harry Lime. Because of his ignorance, he could not understand it, that Harry Lime was faking his death to disguising the police officers of Vienna, and even to his good friend Martins, and his girl Anna too. That's the way he was covering his 'crime' and 'sin' from law, authority, religion and friend etc. and as it is written in the Holy Bible that,

He that covers his sins shall not prosper:  
but whoever confesses and forsakes  
them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 23:13)

In chapter 11, Martins, after left the meeting of officer Calloway goes to bar, and there he thinks about having sex with someone, and resolved in his mind that he would make love with Anna. In spite of knowing that, she is his best friend's girl too:

And he set out obstinately on foot to find Harry's girl. He wanted to make love to her--just like that: no nonsense, no sentiment. He was in the mood for violence,

We can observe this sinful act in *Holy Bible* that it is a grave sin, to have sex out of wedlock, and people who do it are sinners in the eye of God:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immortality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that

those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Further, it can observe in the novel that how Harry Lime's wickedness manifested in his behavior, when he finally met with his friend Rollo Martins. He was not a careful or gracious person, nor does he have the feelings for his friend:

Well, Harry said, 'it's good to see you, Rollo. I was at your funeral.'

That was pretty smart of me, wasn't it?

Not so smart for your girl. She was there too in tears.'

She's a good little thing, Harry said. I'm very fond of her.'

We can see that how 'wicked' person Harry was, Martins was as being his friend, worried about him from the beginning. Even he has no sentiments for his girl, Anna, who loved him with his whole heart and she was so devoted to him, that she rejected the proposal of Martins after she returns from Harry Lime's funeral and knew, the fact that Lime is dead and, she is all alone in this world. She lived alone in Vienna, and loved Harry, after his death, without any expectation. Despite this, Harry insulted her nature and did not appear particularly grateful. Even his closest associate Rollo Martins was disappointed with Harry Lime because of his immoral behavior and criminal mentality, which ultimately led to his death and the deaths of other innocent people. This is the reason why Martins' choice to kill Lime was influenced by the revelations made by Officer Calloway concerning Lime.

Therefore, it depicts, that, how various dimensions of sin manifested through the characters of the novel, *The Third Man*. In addition, it is obvious, that how the acts of sin, affecting everyone's life in the novel. As Greene told it, *The Third Man* had a casual birth: 'Sometimes one may turn them over [stories] after many years and think regretfully they would have been good once, in a time now dead.' (Sherry, 241).Grahame Greene's complexity of portraying characters with moral dilemma cannot be missing. It linger the reader's mind and takes it into a conflicting situation. Greene's mastery over craft related to moral and religious theme is incomparable.

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